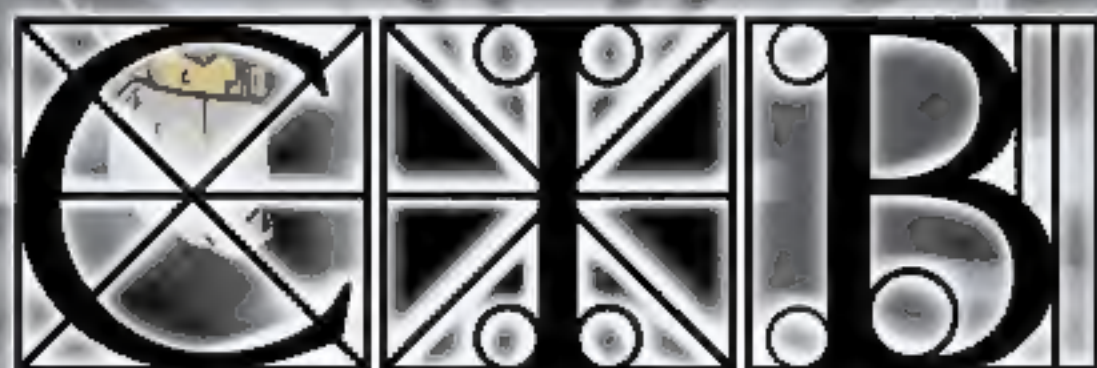




\$2.99 #25

Nodwick™



Clergy In Black



Nodwick

BY AARON WILLIAMS



NODWICK #25 by Aaron Williams, August 2004. Distributed by Dork Storm Press, published by Henchman Publishing, 5545 Holmes St, Kansas City, MO 64110. Fax: (608)255-1342. E-mail: aaron@nodwick.com. Story and art ©2004 Aaron Williams. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication save for brief review excerpts may be reproduced without the express consent of the copyright holder. This is a work of fiction: any similarities to any actual persons or henchmen save for the purpose of satire is purely coincidental. ADVERTISING: sales@DorkStorm.com. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$26 per year. Please contact adventureretail2@qwest.net, or call (651)488-2433 details. All letters to NODWICK assumed intended for publication unless otherwise stated, and become the property of the copyright holder. Isn't it strange that the same people that laugh at gypsy fortune tellers take economists seriously? FIRST PRINTING, August 2004. PRINTED IN CANADA

AS WAS
FORETOLD, THIS WAS
A STUPID PLACE
TO HIDE.

I DIDN'T
HEAR YOU OFFERING ANY
ALTERNATIVES.

WE GAZE
AT DESTINY WITH EYES
OF FRACTURED
CRYSTAL.

SHUFFLE

IF WE PARTAKE OF
THE BREAKFAST CONFECTION,
IT IS OUR FATE TO CONSUME ONLY
A LIGHT MIDDAY REPAST, LEST OUR
ROBES BECOME EVEN MORE
CONFINING.

AND YET, IF WE
DO NOT, PAST BECOMES
PROLOGUE AND WE MAY SEEK
OUT LESS HEALTHY FARE
LATER.

THAT WOULD
BE LOVELY, THANK
YOU.

HI,
THERE!

HELLO,
PIFFANY.

WANT SOME
FRENCH TOAST?



SO YOU'RE ALL
STILL IN THE PROPHECY
BUSINESS?

SHE
REMEMBERS
US.

SHE ALWAYS
REMEMBERS US.

I SEE THE
RING STILL HAS
NO EFFECT ON
YOU.

WHAT RING?

THE ONE WE
USE TO TRY AND ERASE
YOUR MEMORIES
OF US.

IS THAT WHY
YOU ALWAYS SHOW
ME YOUR HAND? I
WONDERED.

I FORETELL
THAT SHE WILL FOREVER
BE IMMUNE.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN
SO, YET WE TRIED.

OUR LAST
ATTEMPT WAS, WHAT,
OVER SEVEN YEARS AGO? I
BELIEVE YOU WERE STILL
LIVING AT YOUR RELIGIOUS
ORDER'S TEMPLE...

OH, YOU MEAN WHEN
THE RUTHENIAN GODDESS OF
BEAUTY AND HAPPINESS CAME TO MY
DORM ROOM FOR TEA? YOU SEEMED
KIND OF UPSET ABOUT THAT.

ONLY AFTER YOU
TOOK HER OUT TO PICK FLOWERS
AND GO SHOPPING WITH YOU.
IN PUBLIC.



I WAS JUST BEING A GOOD HOSTESS TO A GUEST.

YOU WERE PARADING A GODDESS THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF A CITY! IT TOOK US DAYS TO MAKE EVERYONE FORGET THEY'D SEEN HER!

WHY IS THAT SO BAD?

BECAUSE THE HUMAN MIND CAN'T HANDLE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS ON THAT SCALE! MOST PEOPLE CAN BARELY COPE WITH ONE GOD OR ONE PANTHEON. IMAGINE THE CHAOS IF THEY KNEW THAT ALL GODS ARE REAL!

THAT'S THE PRIMARY REASON THE CLERGY IN BLACK EXISTS: TO KEEP THE GODS FROM RUNNING AMOK AND BRINGING DOWN CIVILIZATION...

BUT THE GREAT GOD ZUBORT DID FLOOD THE WORLD!

SUUUUURE HE DID.

YOU SAID IT! THE WATERS RECEDED ONLY AN HOUR AGO! YOU WERE ON THE ROOF OF YOUR HOUSE FOR THIRTY DAYS AND THIRTY NIGHTS AS ZUBORT HIMSELF LECTURED EVERYONE ON HOW HE'S TO BE WORSHIPPED!

LOOK, FOR SOME REASON, ALL MY CLOTHES GOT MILDWEAVED SO I GOTTA DO LAUNDRY, SO I REALLY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS...

BUT SHE WAS A GODDESS OF GOODNESS. MY ORDER REVERES GOODNESS IN ALL ITS FORMS AND INTERACTS WITH MANY GOOD RELIGIONS.

BUT YOU AND YOUR FELLOW... ECUMENICALS ARE TRAINED TO HANDLE THE IDEA OF MULTIPLE DEITIES. YOUR AVERAGE CHURCHGOER CAN BARELY HANDLE MINOR HEALING AND CURATIVES WITHOUT FREAKING OUT.

IF IT WAS KNOWN HOW MANY GODS ARE OUT THERE, DEMANDING ATTENTION, MOST PEOPLE WOULD GO BANANAS.

SYRUP?

THANK YOU.
YOUR LITTLE INCIDENT
WITH THE WORSHIPPERS OF
SKIZZOPREEN WAS ANOTHER
HEADACHE FOR US. THAT
MANIFESTATION WAS VISIBLE
FOR MILES...

SKIZZOPREEN HAS MANIFESTED ELEVEN
TIMES IN THIS AGE. HE HAS PROMISED TO DO SO AGAIN TWO MORE
TIMES BEFORE THE GREAT AWAKENING.

AND THE
AWAKENING SHALL BE
ON A FRIDAY.

I GET IT. SHE TELLS
THE FUTURE AND HE SEES THE PAST! THAT'S
NEATO! WHAT DO YOU DO?

I AM THE PRESENT. I
CHRONICLE WHAT ACTUALLY
COMES TO PASS.

YOU MEAN
IT'S NOT ALWAYS THE
WAY THEY SAY IT
WILL BE?

THE FUTURE IS MALLEABLE,
IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. EVEN
THE PAST ISN'T AS STABLE AS WE'D LIKE TO THINK
IT IS. THERE ARE PEOPLE AND BEINGS MUCKING
ABOUT WITH IT ALL THE TIME.
IT'S A TERRIBLE MESS.

AND SOMEDAY
PIFFANY HERSELF WILL BRING
ABOUT A DISRUPTION TO THE PAST.
ONLY ITS SIZE AND SCOPE IS
UNKNOWN.

WHAT?

NEVER MIND
FUTURE, HERE. SHE'S NOT
ALWAYS RELEVANT TO THE
TOPIC AT HAND.

EVEN WHEN SHE
ISN'T, SHE OFTEN IS TO AN
ASTOUNDING DEGREE.

THANK
YOU...

WHERE ARE THE GUYS?
USUALLY THEY ALL COME RUNNING
WHEN THEY SMELL BREAKFAST COOKING...
OR ANYTHING ELSE, FOR
THAT MATTER.

AH, WELL,
THAT'S THE THING.
THEY DON'T EXIST
ANY MORE.

WHAT?

WE HAD TO ERASE
THEM FROM TIME. WE'RE HERE
FOR A DAMAGE CONTROL MISSION. YOU
AND YOUR FRIENDS HAVE CAUSED QUITE A
PROBLEM, DESTINY-WISE. WE HEARD YOU
COMING DOWNSTAIRS AFTER WE... SENT
THEM AWAY, AND SO WE, AH, HID
IN YOUR CLOSET.

REMOVING THEM
FROM THE UNIVERSE WAS ONE
OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS
TO PREVENT FURTHER
DAMAGE.

BUT EVEN
THEN, THEIR EFFECT
ON WHAT ~~WAS~~ IS SO
GREAT THAT THEY MAY
YET HAVE BEARING ON
WHAT ~~WILL~~ COME.


BUT THEY DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING TO YOU!

BUT THEY
HAVE. THEY MAY
HAVE DOOMED THE
WORLD.

HOW? WHAT
DID THEY DO?

IT STARTED WHEN YOUR
HENCHMAN FRIEND, NODWICK, WAS PUSHED
INTO THE CLEFT OF THE COSMOS. WHEREVER HE
WENT, IT REMOVED HIM FROM THIS UNIVERSE;
HE WAS NO LONGER A PART OF OUR
NATURAL ORDER.

WHEN HE RETURNED, HE BROUGHT
WITH HIM PAST EXPERIENCES FROM ANOTHER
WORLD. HIS LATER ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCE
RIPPLED ACROSS OUR REALITY...



HE CONVINCED YOUR ORDER TO LET YOU **CONTINUE** YOUR ADVENTURES. YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS THEN INTERACTED WITH TWO MAJOR MAGIC ARTIFACTS, THE GAUNTLET OF SUPREMACY AND THE ORB OF OMNISCIENCE.

THESE DEVICES ARE NOW **CHANGED** OR ARE BEING USED IN WAYS **NOT FORESEEN** BY PROPHECY.

ALL OF THIS AFFECTS THE COMING OF BAPHUMAYAL. OUR **PREVIOUS** PROPHECIES ARE NOW **NULL AND VOID**, AS THE ACTORS AND EVENTS HAVE ALL BEEN **CHANGED**. OUR LIMITED PROPHETIC POWERS AREN'T ENOUGH TO GIVE US A **CLEAR** COURSE OF ACTION, AND ALMOST ALL OF OUR PAST SCRIPTURE IS NOW **USELESS**.

BUT MAYBE IT'LL BE EASIER TO **DE-ICKIFY** HIM NOW.

MAYBE?



WE MAY NEVER KNOW.
PROPHECY GIVES US **KEY MOMENTS**
WHERE CHANGING DESTINY IS THE **MOST EFFECTIVE**.
NOW ALMOST ALL OF THOSE KEY MOMENTS ARE **LOST** TO
US, UNLESS WE EITHER GET THINGS BACK ON TRACK OR
WE ARE PRESENTED WITH **NEW**
FORETELLINGS.

BUT WHY DID
THE GUYS HAVE TO BE
TAKEN AWAY?



THEY ARE **TAKEN** BY
ANOTHER UNIVERSE. WHILE ONLY
ONE LEFT THIS WORLD, ALL OF YOU BECAME
TOO **DISRUPTIVE** TO BE ALLOWED TO
CONTINUE AFFECTING DESTINY.

YOU REMAIN
BECAUSE YOU STILL HAVE
AN **IMPORTANT** ROLE
TO PLAY.

EVEN I CAN SENSE
THE **GREATNESS** OF YOUR
IMPACT ON THE **FLOW**
OF FATE.



BUT THAT'S NOT
FAIR! YOU NEED TO BRING
THEM **BACK!**

YOU WOULD
JEOPARDIZE THE
WORLD FOR THEIR
SAKE?

WELL... WHY CAN'T
I HAVE THE **BOYS** BACK AND **SAVE**
THE **WORLD?** I'M SURE THEY'D
HELP OUT...

YOU ARE ASKING
MUCH OF US.

THEY HAVE
ALREADY CAUSED
SO MUCH
DAMAGE.

AND THEY
WOULD **CONTINUE** THEIR
DISRUPTIONS INTO THE
YEARS TO COME.









AH, THANK YOU.

ER, NO, THAT WON'T DEFEAT HIM. WHILE WE CAN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT IS TO BE DONE, I CAN TELL YOU WHERE YOU SHOULD SET YOUR SIGHTS.

YOU MUST SEEK OUT AN ANCIENT MONASTERY. THE BROTHERHOOD LIVING THERE HAS BEEN KEEPING A CACHE OF MAGICAL WEAPONS THERE THAT CAN HELP DEFEAT BAPHUM'AL.

THE ONE WHO WEARS THE GAUNTLET OF SUPREMACY IS REACHING OUT TO CLAIM THESE WEAPONS FOR HIS MASTER TO DESTROY. YOU MUST DELIVER THEM FROM HIS CLUTCHES.

OKAY, THEN WHAT?

THE EVENTS FOLLOWING YOUR JOURNEY TO THE MONASTERY ARE UNCLEAR. YOU WILL HAVE TO FIND OUT ON YOUR OWN.









PARDON ME
MY MIND WAS ON
SOMETHING
TWENTY MINUTES
FROM NOW.

IT WOULD
APPEAR OUR PAST
HAS CAUGHT UP
TO US.

HEY... THESE GUYS SMELL LIKE
PIFFANNY'S FRENCH TOAST!

THEY
MUST'VE
RAIDED OUR
KITCHEN!

NOBODY
BOGARTS OUR
BREAKFAST!



CALM YOURSELVES. SHE
WILL MAKE MORE OF HER MORNING-
MEAL DELICACIES.



NOW, AS FOR
WHAT YOU'RE GOING
TO DO IN THE
MEANTIME...



ABOUT AN HOUR LATER...

WHERE ON EARTH COULD
THEY BE? AT LEAST, I HOPE THEY'RE
ON EARTH. WE'VE GOT LOTS OF GROUND
TO COVER AND I—



THERE
THEY ARE!

HEY!
GUYS!

AM I GLAD
I FOUND YOU WE
NEED TO—

LOOK!
PIFFANY ARRIVED
HAS SHE! GO WE
MUST TO HOME-
BOARD HER
WITH!

TOAST FRENCH,
AND THEN THE ROAD MUST WE
ON GO! IMPORTANT QUESTING
STUFF DO WE!



ARTAX? ARE
YOU OKAY?



HIBBLE-HIBBLE-
HIBBLE-HIBBLE-HIBBLE. HIBBLE-
HIBBLE, HIBBLE!



WHEE!



I THINK THOSE
C.I.B. GUYS DIDN'T BRING THEM
BACK ALL THE WAY.



THAT EVENING...





FOR THE EIGHTIETH TIME, WE'RE ON A QUEST TO GO RESCUE MAGIC ARTIFACTS FROM A FAR-ABAY MONASTERY THAT'S GOING TO BE RAIDED BY THAT ICKY-POO BAPHUMMAL.

WANT A TOASTED MARSHMALLOW?



THE LAST THING I REMEMBER—

YOU THOUGHT YOU WON A CONTEST, BUT YOU DIDN'T.

THERE WASN'T A UNION MEETING.

AND I—

THERE WAS—

NO NAUGHTY SORCERESSES, EITHER.



HOW MANY FINGERS AM I HOLDING UP BEHIND MY—

THREE.



I'VE ASKED
YOU THAT EIGHTY TIMES,
HAVENT I?

AND I ALWAYS
PICK THREE?

YUP.

SO FAR,
IF IT MAKES YOU
FEEL BETTER, I GOT
IT WRONG THE
FIRST TIME.



A QUEST,
YOU SAY?

YAY! I
THINK YOUR BRAINS ARE
STARTING TO REMEMBER
STUFF AGAIN!

WE
WALKED
ALL THIS WAY
AND DON'T
REMEMBER
IT?

WELL, YOU
PROBABLY WERENT
FEELING YOUR BEST.
YOU ALL GOT ERASED
FROM REALITY AND
THEN BROUGHT BACK,
SO I'M NOT SURPRISED
IT TOOK YOU A WHILE
TO RECOVER.



I THINK I'LL HAVE A
MARSHMALLOW NOW.

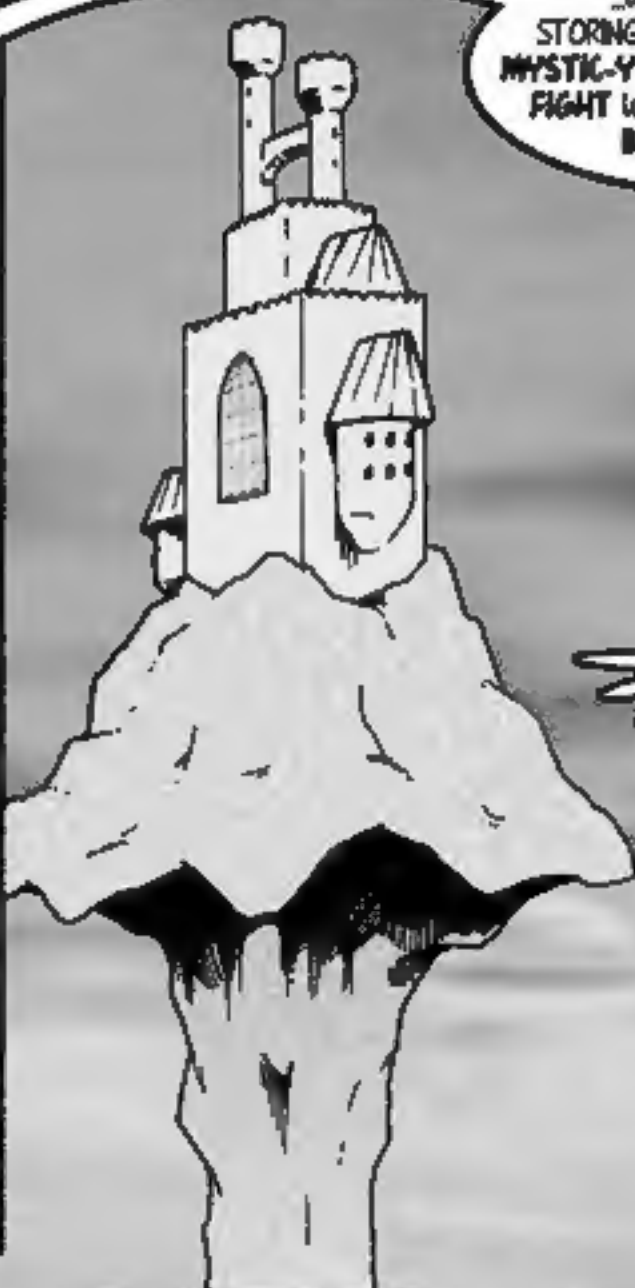
YES.
THAT SOUNDS
SAME.

AND MAYBE
YOU CAN TELL US WHERE
WE'RE GOING...



WELL, ACCORDING
TO SOME VERY IMPORTANT
PROPHECY-PEOPLE, WE HAVE TO GO
TRAVEL TO THIS STRANGE MONASTERY
THAT'S WAY ON A TIPPY-TOP
MOUNTAIN PEAK.

...WHERE THEY'RE
STORING ALL THESE MAGIC-
MYSTIC-Y THINGS FOR A BIG OL'
FIGHT WITH THAT POO-HEAD
BAPHUNGA'AL...

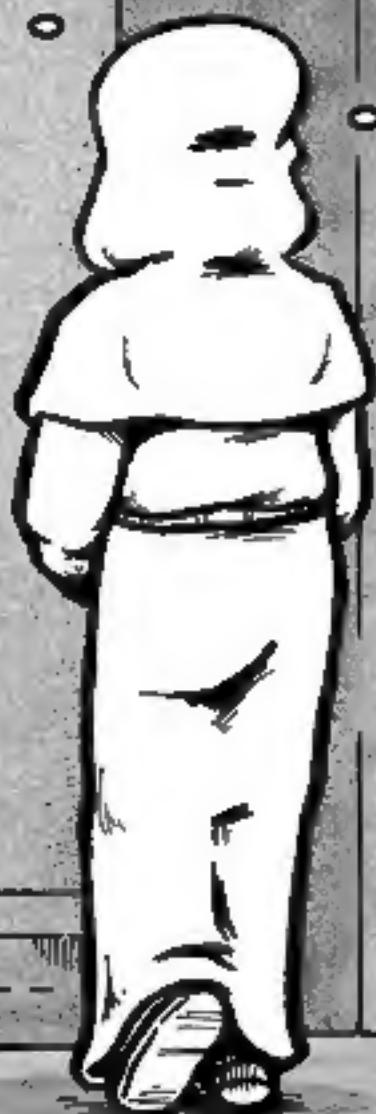




*Enemies are coming. So are we. Make sure
we are victorious, or you will suffer greatly.*

OH, DEAR.
THIS IS GOING TO BE
MESSY, INDEED.

WHO MADE BRINGING
ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD SO
BLOOMING DIFFICULT?



GASP!

Continued next issue...



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